

ARIZONA STATE VETERINARY MEDICAL EXAMINING BOARD  
1740 W. ADAMS ST., SUITE 4600, PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007  
PHONE (602) 364-1PET (1738) FAX (602) 364-1039  
VETBOARD.AZ.GOV

COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION FORM

If there is an issue with more than one veterinarian please file a separate Complaint Investigation Form for each veterinarian

PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Received: NOV. 19, 2018 Case Number: 19-41

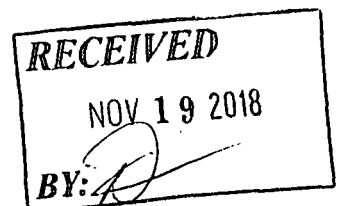
A. THIS COMPLAINT IS FILED AGAINST THE FOLLOWING:

Name of Veterinarian/CVT: Blue Pearl Veterinary Partners (no vet was ever seen)  
Premise Name: Blue Pearl Veterinary Partners  
Premise Address: 3110 E. Indian School Rd  
City: Phoenix State: AZ Zip Code: 85016  
Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

B. INFORMATION REGARDING THE INDIVIDUAL FILING COMPLAINT\*:

Name: Curt Andes  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

\*STATE LAW REQUIRES WE HAVE TO DISCLOSE YOUR NAME UNLESS WE CAN SHOW THAT DISCLOSURE WILL RESULT IN SUBSTANTIAL HARM TO YOU, SOMEONE ELSE OR THE PUBLIC PER A.R.S. § 41-1010. IF YOU HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT SUBSTANTIAL HARM WILL RESULT IN DISCLOSURE OF YOUR NAME PLEASE PROVIDE COPIES OF RESTRAINING ORDERS OR OTHER DOCUMENTATION.



**C. PATIENT INFORMATION (1):**

Name: Crystal  
Breed/Species: Chihuahua mix  
Age: 15 Sex: F Color: Tan/white

**PATIENT INFORMATION (2):**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Breed/Species: \_\_\_\_\_  
Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Color: \_\_\_\_\_

**D. VETERINARIANS WHO HAVE PROVIDED CARE TO THIS PET FOR THIS ISSUE:**

*Please provide the name, address and phone number for each veterinarian.*

*We were never able to see the vet.  
The day after this incident, we took Crystal to  
the Blue Cross Vet clinic at 4111 N. 36th St in Phoenix,  
where Crystal received excellent care.*

**E. WITNESS INFORMATION:**

*Please provide the name, address and phone number of each witness that has direct knowledge regarding this case.*

*Tanis Andes (Crystal <sup>was</sup> ~~is~~ Tanis's dog)*  
*[Redacted Address]*  
*[Redacted Phone Number]*

**Attestation of Person Requesting Investigation**

By signing this form, I declare that the information contained herein is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. Further, I authorize the release of any and all medical records or information necessary to complete the investigation of this case.

Signature: *[Signature]*

Date: 11/15/2018

## Section F

Crystal's experience at BluePearl Emergency Vet

1. My sister's dog, Crystal, was very ill and had been near the end of her life for many days.
2. We had a vet appt with her usual vet on Saturday morning, but she got much worse Friday night, and so we decided that she shouldn't have to suffer all night long. So, we decided to take her the BluePearl vet clinic at 3110 E. Indian School Rd, in Phoenix.
3. Arrived about 7:50 pm
4. Checked in fairly efficiently
5. We explained that
  - o Crystal had not eaten in 2 days
  - o She had not had any water for several hours
  - o She had Cushings disease, so she urinated frequently and was probably getting dehydrated
  - o She could not walk, not even stand
  - o We believed Crystal needed to be put to sleep, but wanted to speak with the vet.
6. Crystal was taken in the back for a quick check, and we were told all her vitals were fine.
  - o This was nonsense, as her respiration rate was above 60 per minute.
  - o Crystal's eyes were glassy, she was staring ahead, not moving.
  - o How anyone could believe her vitals were normal is a mystery. I decided not to question them as we figured we'd see the vet soon.
7. We were shown into an exam room after about 5 min, maybe 10.
8. Our small dying dog was put directly across the hall from a very large Husky-type dog that was very vocal, which of course scared Crystal.
9. Crystal was put on the floor to wait, sprawled out rather spread-eagle, obviously breathing hard.
10. We never saw any employee again besides the receptionist, no vet or vet tech.
11. After 20-30 minutes the receptionist came in and said the vet needed to do some surgery and it would be 3-4 hours before we could be seen, we could wait if we wanted.
12. We didn't want to traumatize the dog further by transporting her again, so we said we would wait.
13. After 3.5 hours (about 11:40pm), the receptionist came in and said the vet had not started the surgery yet, and so we'd have to wait 3 or 4 more hours. She gave us a list of other emergency rooms "that probably won't be so busy, just call them."
  - o Surgery that should have started at 3.5 hours earlier was not started, and yet we were not informed for over 3.5 hours?
  - o There was not a heavy stream of clients coming in, we could see the lobby and desk from our waiting room. Those that came in, their pets were taken to the back, later those people left with their pets.
14. During this 3.5 hour wait not one single person came in to check on Crystal. I did go out twice to verify we would be seen at about midnight, and to tell the receptionist that Crystal was vomiting (about 10:00).

15. We decided that we were probably never going to get help for Crystal, so we decided to leave. The receptionist got us a gurney, and as we wheeled Crystal out to the car, she had diarrhea all over the gurney and herself.
16. The receptionist called for some help, nobody came.
17. The receptionist got us a roll of paper towels and some dog pads for the car, but despite me asking several times for some wet rags or towels to clean up the dog, none were made available.
18. We took Crystal home, where she cried all night. At 10:30 the next morning, Crystal's regular vet finally euthanized her.

During this entire episode we never saw a vet, and after the initial checkin, never saw a vet tech. Nobody actually showed any interest in ending the suffering of the 15-year-old dying dog in the exam room.

I have had 7 animals euthanized, and I have never, ever witnessed anything like this. This was unconscionable. Appalling. Nobody cared (ok, maybe the receptionist did, but she was obviously not able to effect any change or get help). If they weren't going to help the dog, why not just tell us so maybe we could go to another facility where they do care? Nothing, they were apparently just waiting around for the dog to die on her own.

Danielle Strohacker, DVM  
BluePearl  
3110 E. Indiana School Rd.  
Phoenix, Arizona 85015

12/4/2018

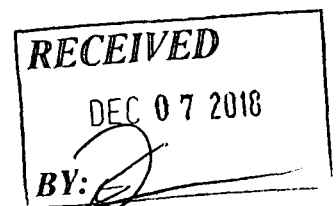
Arizona State Veterinary medical Examining Board  
1740 W. Adams St., Ste. 4600  
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Re: Case No. 19-41

To whom it may concern,

In regards to Mr. Andes' complaint, I was not scheduled to work or present at the hospital when "Crystal" presented to BluePearl on Friday, October 5<sup>th</sup>. A copy of the medical record is enclosed, as well as a statement from Dr. Sarah Mayer, who examined Crystal on October 5<sup>th</sup>. If you need any additional information, please contact me.

  
Danielle Strohacker, DVM





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**INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT**

**TO:** Arizona State Veterinary Medical Examining Board

**FROM:** PM Investigative Committee: Donald Noah, D.V.M. - **Absent**  
Amrit Rai, D.V.M.  
Adam Almaraz – **Acting Chair**  
Christine Butkiewicz, D.V.M.  
William Hamilton

**STAFF PRESENT:** Tracy A. Riendeau, Investigations  
Michael Raine, Assistant Attorney General  
Victoria Whitmore, Executive Director

**RE:** Case: 19-41

Complainant(s): Curt Andes

Respondent(s): Danielle Strohacker, DVM (License: 6234)

**SUMMARY:**

Complaint Received at Board Office: 11/19/18

Committee Discussion: 2/5/19

Board IIR: 3/20/19

**APPLICABLE STATUTES AND RULES:**

Laws as Amended August 2018

(Lime Green); Rules as Revised

September 2013 (Yellow)

On October 5, 2018, "Crystal," a 15-year-old female Chihuahua mix was presented to Respondent's premise on emergency for vomiting and lethargy. The dog was triaged and deemed stable enough to wait to be seen. The wait time increased throughout the evening, therefore Complainant elected to take the dog home.

The following day, the dog was presented to Blue Cross Veterinary Clinic for humane euthanasia.

Respondent is the responsible veterinarian for the premise.

**Complainant was noticed and appeared.**

**Respondent was noticed and appeared telephonically. Attorney, David Stoll, appeared.**

**The Committee reviewed medical records, testimony, and other documentation as described below:**

- Complainant(s) narrative: *Curt Andes*
- Respondent(s) narrative/medical record: *Danielle Strohacker, DVM*
- Consulting veterinarian(s) narrative/medical record: *Blue Cross Veterinary Clinic*

**PROPOSED 'FINDINGS of FACT':**

1. On October 5, 2018, the dog was presented on emergency to Blue Pearl for vomiting and lethargy. The dog was taken into the treatment area where Dr. Mayer performed a cursory exam and the dog was found to be neurologically normal; pink mucous membranes and respiratory system auscultated normal. The dog's vitals were: Weight = 15.4kgs, temperature = 103.4 degrees, heart rate = 140bpm and respiration rate = panting.

2. Dr. Mayer stated that it was recommended the dog remain in the treatment area for monitoring and the pet owners declined as they felt the dog would be too stressed without them. The dog was brought back to the pet owner; technical staff relayed that the dog's vitals were stable but did have a mildly elevated temperature. Dr. Mayer stated that the pet owner s did not express interest in humane euthanasia to staff at any point.

3. According to Complainant, after about a 20 – 30 minute wait, they were advised that a patient needed surgery and it would be another 3 – 4 hours before the dog could be seen. Complainant agreed to wait. After 3.5 hours, staff informed the pet owners that surgery had not started and it could be another 3 – 4 hours before the dog would be evaluated. The staff gave Complainant a list of emergency rooms that may not be busy and could see the dog right away. The pet owners decided to leave; the dog was taken out on a gurney to the vehicle. The dog passed diarrhea on the gurney and on herself – Complainant requested wet towels to help clean up the dog, however the staff only brought out paper towels and pads for the vehicle.

4. Dr. Mayer stated in her narrative that Complainant was made aware of the prolonged wait time on entry and was updated multiple times. The pet owners were also informed of the option to pursue care at another emergency premise that might have shorter wait times. Staff also offered to call other locations to help determine other wait times, which was declined.

5. On October 6, 2018, the dog was presented to Blue Cross Veterinary Clinic for humane euthanasia.

**COMMITTEE DISCUSSION:**

Some Committee members discussed that they had concerns that the pet owner waited for an extended period of time and did not see a veterinarian. Complainant had to step out of the exam room to get updates by staff.

Veterinary Committee members explained that if this was a primary care veterinarian then they would be concerned, however, since this is an emergency facility it is run similarly to a human emergency room. The dog was triaged and determined to be stable, not needing critical immediate care. The premise will attend to pets needing immediate emergent care.

This was an unfortunate situation as it was already a tough time for the pet owners and was made more difficult by this happening. The Committee discussed that the case was handled appropriately for the circumstances.

**COMMITTEE'S PROPOSED CONCLUSIONS of LAW:**

The Committee concluded that no violations of the *Veterinary Practice Act* occurred.

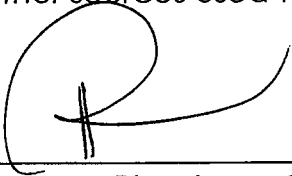
**COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDED DISPOSITION:**

**Motion:** It was moved and seconded the Board:

*Dismiss this issue with no violation.*

**Vote:** The motion was approved with a vote of 4 to 0.

*The information contained in this report was obtained from the case file, which includes the complaint, the respondent's response, any consulting veterinarian or witness input, and any other sources used to gather information for the investigation.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'TRACY A. RIENDEAU', written over a horizontal line.

Tracy A. Riendeau, CVT  
Investigative Division